

## Norwegian Digital Learning Arena as a sustainable organization model

### Extended Abstract.

In this presentation, we aim to address the UNESCO OER Recommendation, Action Area no 4, engaging the global open education community with nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER, by presenting NDLAs organization and governance models as models of sustainability.

NDLA is an OE-repository financed, governed and owned by the majority of the Norwegian counties. Since 2009, the counties have allocated a certain percentage of their budget to develop efficient ways of making free resources available to upper secondary school students in Norway. Today the platform covers more than 100 subjects.

The counties select representatives that together make up NDLAs governing committee. The committee consists of a mix of politicians and county officials. We also have a board that is made up of county officials, headmasters and others in relevant positions in research, universities etc. This model of governance secures NDLA's close link to public service and democratic institutions, as well as the schools that we serve. It also gives the counties control over the budgets, ensuring that public money is spent on public service, in the form of learning resources. It is a responsible and sustainable model.

Most of the material is made by teachers who are engaged by NDLA for a certain period of time, before returning to their schools. This guarantees a close relationship with teachers' and pupils' needs and wants. It also functions as a career opportunity and a chance to build teachers' subject competency. A considerable portion of the teachers also work part-time as teachers and part time in NDLA, and are able to test the material directly in their classroom, to ensure its pedagogical and didactic quality. It is also a safe and sustainable model in the way that it does not drain the schools of competent teachers, they are just otherwise engaged for a while. When teachers work for NDLA, they are paid for their work per hour in the same fashion as in their teacher job, not per resource.

NDLA also has a quality team that advises and supports the people making the resources, ensuring that language is correct and that pictures and videos are of the right quality. They also assist in questions concerning what licences a resource

needs to have. These people are also teachers, and they acquire a very specialized competence to take back to their schools later.

This “flow” of teachers in and out of the organization depending on which subjects we are making resources for at the moment, and what competencies we are in need of, is a flow of competence development, and ensures that we are made for teachers and pupils, by teachers. It is a circular flow, not draining any part of the system.

To further ensure that we are making the right resources, and that we are in touch with our users, we have “pilot schools” all over the country, where teachers and pupils test our resources and our design and give us feedback.

We also buy material and competence in the Norwegian market, helping Norwegian EdTech to thrive and make money on open source solutions. Our materials are mostly CC-BY-SA licensed, ensuring that teachers and pupils can reuse and adapt the material for their own classrooms and their own learning, as well as sharing it further.

Our platform technology is open to anyone globally. Our dream is that other ventures globally will take our technology and develop their own platform and their own resources in a way that fits their context. That would be one way of contributing to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal no 4: inclusive and equitable quality education for all, which is our ambition. The Global Digital Library which provides children all over the world with reading materials in their own languages, was developed on NDLA’s platform technology.

Our next step is to create a platform for teachers and students to collaborate, share their experiences and make their own collections of resources. Through this, we also hope to commit to UN’s SDG no. 4, by inviting teachers to share material in subjects that we are not able to cover in our repository today and in that way help to provide material for more pupils.

NDLA is a success that has been around for twelve years, and today has the highest number of visitors at our platform ever, in 2020 we had 17.2 million visits. However, as we work towards our goals of providing quality educational resources that are accessible to all, and free to use and adapt, we face a set of challenges. As a community, Norway is still very much into the old paradigm that looks at educational resources as a scarce commodity that are expensive, and that price

and quality are linked together. There are still very few that understand open licencing thoroughly, and look into business models based on open licencing. We often meet concerns from writers and illustrators, who think that if we pay them once for using their work, and not “per download” this will reduce their income.

Our close link to political government at county level, that I described earlier as an important factor to ensure our role as a public service, can also be a challenge as we are vulnerable to political opinions about the issues addressed above.

Onwards, we are looking at ways to contribute to an open, public debate about OER in Norway that will engage both stakeholders and the broader public.

Information and discussion are the keys to further the ideas of OER, as well as connecting and learning from the global OER community.